

Serious threat to koalas must be addressed

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The group assembled in Mudgee at the Save Our Koalas rally. Photo: Supplied

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BY STAFF REPORTERS

A GROUP of passionate environmental advocates met in Mudgee in an attempt to highlight the threats to local koala populations due to multiple mining projects in the region.

The 'save our koalas rally', organised by Mudgee District Environment Group (MDEG) and supported by Nature Conservation Council NSW, called on the state government to recognise Mudgee's koalas in its NSW Koala Strategy which currently focuses on coastal habitats.

The rally heard from Bev Smiles, spokesperson for the MDEG.

"Our koalas are facing annihilation from multiple major projects that will wipe out hundreds of hectares of koala habitat," she said.

Mick Boller, Mudgee

Region Action Group gave observation figures and local counts from the Lue area.

"The Lue area has a significant Koala population and core Koala habitat threatened by mining," he said.

The group said a silver and lead mine at Lue had been approved by the NSW government to clear 381.7 hectares of koala habitat, while the Moolarben Coal Mine was seeking approval to clear 113 hectares of koala habitat for a mine expansion.

In March the Land and Environment Court dismissed a legal challenge against the approved Lue silver and lead mine brought by a group of Mudgee region residents. In April, in response to concerns raised by the community, a Yancoal spokesperson said the company revised the project design to ensure that the project will deliver a nature-positive outcome.

"Yancoal has reduced the disturbance footprint of the extension project by 18 per cent. These amendments to the project address particular issues related to biodiversity and the local koala population," a spokesperson said.

Nature Conservation Council Chief Executive Officer Jacqui Mumford said koalas are under threat from all angles across the state.

"If we can't turn this species decline around, in NSW koalas face extinction in the wild by 2050. It is critical that remaining koala habitat is appropriately mapped, prioritised and protected," she said.

The submission period for public comment on the NSW Koala Strategy has been extended and closes on May 24. More information is available on the NSW Dept of Environment and Heritage website.